 

St Margaret’s Episcopal Church Vestry

Subject: Minutes for 21 March 2023

Attending: Peter Mayer+ (Rector), Kristen Berthelotte (Senior Warden)Z, Paul Shurke (Junior Warden), Katherine Wiernicki (Treasurer), Elizabeth Radley (Director of Operations) Z, Dave Boyce, Austin Canuel , Matt ChasseZ, Mary Holstine, Alden Gross, Janice John, Lana Keelty, Kathy Lang, Chris PrenderZ, Susan RobertsZ, Dan Tootle, Ernie Tucker, Carol Williams, and Jim Barnett (Clerk).

Also in attendance: Christine FeldmanZ (for Grants)

Not Attending: Patti Sachs (Associate Rector)

This meeting was conducted in Hybrid format. Zoom attendees are noted by a “Z” after their name.

A Quorum was present.

1. Opening prayer was given at 7:00 pm by Kathy Lang.

2. The meeting was called to order by the Rector. The February 2023 Vestry minutes were approved as amended. The Rector led the Vestry in singing Happy Birthday to Janice John.

3. Submitted Reports:

A. **The Annual Grants awards for 2023 were presented by Christine Feldman (posted):**

There were 36 applicants and 10 were interviewed. Eight were recommended for funding.

The Grants process was a challenge this year with the reduction in funding and the second year of a two-year grant.

A brief review of each of the proposed award grants was provided.

The Vestry questioned the transfer of funding mechanism to countries that are not supported by a U.S. Bank. The Christians United for Evangelism, Education and Development is one such potential awardee and is located in South Sudan but represented by a bank in Kenya. Due diligence was done with another church in North Carolina who wired funds to the same establishment and the transfer was completed. One of the Grants Committee members has done a lot of work with international development groups and is confident there will not be an issue here.

The Vestry was reminded that the Siempre Unidos effort in Honduras was the 2 year grant recipient both last year and this. This special pilot grant is working to help poor Hondurans who work in the garbage pits to provide health and medical attention where it is needed the most.

The Vestry was reminded of the work the TRRTF did with the Vestry and Grants Administrator to add a 5th category for applicants to qualify for consideration. The fifth category, as agreed by all, is “Implement trust, enable reconciliation, or confront structural racism and inequity.” In a review of previous Grants awards, a significant number of awardees fit into this category, as well as others. This year is no exception.

The mechanism for allocating funds available to the Grants process is not a fixed percentage of the Endowment. More correctly, it is a number agreed by the Vestry based on the financial situation of the church in that year. While 5% remains the objective, it is neither a minimum nor maximum in any given year.

The Dioceses uses a rolling 12 quarter aggregate average to avoid the market fluctuations that impact their endowment. We could consider the same sort of math model to mitigate large fluctuations.

The Vestry was then advised that this year’s Grants evaluation shows that about 61% went to “people of color.”

The Grants Administrator wanted to thank the Treasurer and Vestry for providing the available total early in the process.

Do we hear from recipients? There is a requirement for an end of year report from each grantee. Furthermore, some liaisons maintain contact with their requestor over time.

**The Rector then suggested that the Vestry approve the slate as presented. Seeing no objection, so approved.**

The Rector then asked the Vestry to remind parishioners about this process and SMC’s largess in this regard. When it was announced last year in the services, no one seemed to get it. Not all churches do this, nor do they do it as well.

**B. Rector’s Report (posted):**

Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations: it should be reminded that the diocese called for us to take the initiative on this subject. In this regard, the Vestry is encouraged to attend the Annual Father’s Day Family (AFDF) Ball on April 1, 2023. A flyer is available online. As we continue building our relationship with AFDF, the next step would be to build more bridges between groups at Asbury Broadneck UMC. Another issue we have is attendance at our coffee hour TRRTF chats. This past Sunday, when we had the Canon for Missions from the diocese, we had 52 people in attendance. Ten of them were from Asbury Broadneck, and eight more were from TRR. Several other parishioners had formerly been on the task force. We need to see more of our community getting involved in this process and buying in to what we’re doing. It seems that our younger families are not as engaged with this effort.

It was noted that several members of the Vestry did not attend the TRRTF Coffee Chat. It was noted that “just because we were not there, we do support the effort.” This is not just about the Vestry; it is inclusive of our parishioners and neighbors.

We may need to take greater steps toward more risk, avail ourselves to greater discomfort in this regard.

The TRRTF Committee invites greater participation both at the Task Force level and at other events. See Dragon Tales for coming events for consideration. Talk to the members of the Task Force, they want to know how you feel. Parishioners live “equity” in their daily lives. This isn’t the only game in town, and we can only be in one place at a time. There was some discussion regarding the need for a plan or strategy to help guide the way. We hear you and the message is received.

It was noted that a non-SMC member who did attend the Coffee Chat indicated that our vision is too limited. The implication here was that we were too restrictive in looking at the communities of color in our Broadneck area, many of the descendants of slaves in our neighborhood have moved some distance away.

**B. Treasurers Report (posted):**

Operating results for February 2023 report revenues in excess of expenses of $73,574. This amount is ahead of the year-to-date budget through the end of February by $48,029. Pledge receipts are currently ahead of budget by $34,182; however, Donations are behind budget by $(3,791). Please keep in mind the timing of Pledge receipts does not equate to an increase in the overall pledged amount for the fiscal year. For the month of February, total expenses are running behind budget by $(17,545).

There were no contributions to or withdrawals from any of the Endowment Accounts during February 2023. The total market value of the Endowment as of February 28, 2023 was $4,509,740.17 and $(97,839.52) of unrealized losses were reported as of month-end.

On March 16th, I was contacted by a teller at the York Road branch of Truist Bank in Towson, Maryland. A gentleman attempted to cash a supposed St. Margaret’s Check at the counter for approximately $1,400. The Treasurer will continue to work with the bank to get this straightened out. For starters, she has filed fraud reports with the appropriate agencies. SMC will need to open a new account with attendant checks. For the short term, we will need to draw from the Endowment. The bank will continue to investigate, and we will continue to operate.

**C. Day School Report (posted):**

The Rector has engaged the SMDS school board and discussion continues regarding cost sharing. More needs to happen but it is a question as to how quickly we can get closer, and we don’t want to drift towards a “we versus them” situation. We seem to be in a race to find a discomfort level for both SMDS and SMC. SMDS has been reminded that liability resides with SMC and specifically, the Vestry. SMC can call the tune in this regard. If the school needed help, SMC and Vestry would have stepped up.

A request was put on the table to reduce the scholarship for the next calendar year from $10,000 to $5,425 and provide that as a basis for continuing discussion for the liaison. Their budget year is different. As SMDS continues with their budget development, we need to monitor both their progress and the status of the Endowment as it is impacted by market movements. The cycle is what the cycle is but we need to be mindful of that. The parents of potential students need to know what funds are available in support for planning. Liaison was asked to go back and ask SMDS when SMDS actually need the funds.

It may be time to put more SMDS oversight on the school budget process and execution. The Dioceses Council exercise greater oversight and control over the budget of The Claggett School but it’s more of a guardrail. The vestry was reminded that there is no line in the Operating budget for SMDS scholarships, those funds come from the Endowment. They were also reminded that SMDS has its own scholarship endowment that can be renegotiated with the founder.

There are several Parishioners on the SMDS school board in addition to the Rector and liaison. While the relationship is better than it was under the previous school administrator, there is room for greater transparency.

**D. Adult Formation Council:**

This is a new effort the Rector has started to augment such things as the Book Club, EFM, Senior Session, and Monday night formation. He is looking for more focus and a strategic overview. The Rector has a list that he thinks needs to be pared down to about 6. He has asked Paul O’Donnell to head up the effort and Paul will develop a list of additional members. The Rector hopes this will provide greater purpose to engage younger families. We are in the early stages and hope to have the effort up and running by this fall. “Bear with us, more to come.”

**E. Junior Warden (no written report):**

Good Seed Sunday is scheduled for April 30th. Community Work Day is this Saturday (25 March). The Vestry was reminded that they are responsible for the Columbarium.

There is now a television in the nursery so that attendants can stream services there.

The Junior Warden reflected that there were no large expenditures anticipated over the next 9 months. We are not far enough along to have a good number for the enhanced security measures. The Maryland Grant process for this ended up being too hard.

**F. Senior Warden’s Report (posted):**

This month has been another busy one for outreach activities. The outreach council is working on a new nametag system for the church, primarily organized by Molly Owens in conjunction with Rev. Patti +. Adult church members for all three services will have permanent, magnetized nametags on a magnetic whiteboard displayed in the narthex and will be encouraged to wear their nametags throughout the service and during coffee hour. We will have baskets located in several locations where parishioners will put their nametags so that they can be replaced for use again the next week. Paper nametags will be provided/encouraged for those who are visiting or don’t have one. The goal is to have 100% participation in name tags, with all members returning their nametags to the basket before they leave so they can be set up for the following Sunday on the magnet board.

The idea behind this system is that: 1) people will be able to greet each other more easily by name, 2) we can readily identify visitors by their paper nametag and 3) we can identify pastoral needs by noting who hasn’t been to church recently and invite regular church goers to participate in volunteer activities like ushering, etc.

Donuts will be provided this Saturday for the Community Work Day monthly.

Most of the report reflects the Senior Warden's focus on outreach and the formation of a Council to address this problem.  The Outreach Council, as we have named ourselves, currently consists of Janice John, Emily DelSordo, Molly Owens and myself.  Our current idea is a masquerade ball, to be held at the church on October 14th, 2023. We have discussed having a silent auction, heavy hors d’oeuvres (buffet and some passed), drinks, dancing, and babysitting offered down the hall in the classrooms. We have discussed charging $50 per ticket and raising money for the “missions and grants” of St. Margaret’s.

**5. For the Good of the Order.**

Thanks to all the Vestry members who signed up to help with Coffee Hour this Sunday.

There will be a middle school retreat in the third week of April.

Please make sure you mark the 14th of October for the Masquerade fundraiser for Missions. Please get the word out on this. It will run from 6-10 PM and will be lots of fun.

Canon McCloud’s engagement with SMC last Sunday was a success. She spoke for about 25 minutes at the Coffee Chat hosted by the TRRTF. It was suggested that perhaps these could be streamed for those who were not able to attend or at least taped. The Rector will look into finding someone who can make that happen. Dave Boyce indicated that if SMC is hosting someone who must travel some distance, they are welcome to stay in their guest house.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 PM.